

Rwandan Ethnoscape More Than 400 Years Later: The Failure of De-Ethnicization Policy?

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Abstract

Rwanda is inhabited by three groups of people called Tutsi Twa and Hutu. Regardless of how their social and political uses shaped the history of the country, they are still disputed semantics. They are differently approached and given different appellations such as caste, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic groups, etc.; despite the prohibition of the use of these social groups in public after the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, they are still prevalent in the contemporary Rwandan sociopolitical space and used equally by ordinary people and political elites. The question of whether Tutsi Twa and Hutu are socio-economic groups or distinct ethnic identities was solved using a comparative literature review approach in anthropology and theories of ethnic groups and ethnicity. It is now more than 400 years later that, contrary to the socio-economic status school widely accepted; due to marginalization, discrimination, instrumentalization, and politicization, the former socio-economic groups Hutu Twa and Tutsi evolved to be distinct ethnic identities. I argue also that besides ethnic denial and amnesia, like the previous ones, the current Rwandan socio-political arena is still built on ethnocentrism. Contrary to the widely accepted narrative that the ethnicization or racialization of Tutsi Twa and Hutu is the work of white colonizers, they only strengthened the already existing social divide and ethnicization. Since current theoretical approaches to ethnicity do not suit the current Rwandan ethnoscape, a modified version of the integrated theory of Philip Q Yang, the integrated-blame game theory was proposed. The aim of this paper is to debunk the current ethnic denial and amnesia and de-ethnicization policies currently practiced as instruments used to cover the continued ethnicity-based socio-economic marginalization process and that blaming all evils on colonizers mislead the search for everlasting solutions to Rwandan socio-political problems.

Keywords: ethnic group, ethnicization, socioeconomic group, feudalism, oppression

Introduction

Many scholars including Uwizeyimana (2017); Goehrung (2007); McDoom (2022); Mégret (2015); and Nsengimana (2019), argue that if things continue to evolve in the direction of the status quo, Rwanda risks of re-entering the dark days of bloody inter-ethnic conflict. The current government's narratives argue that Tutsi Twa and Hutu were groups whose membership was based on economic status of the beholder, and that the three groups peacefully lived side by side and that hatred against each other, ethnicization and racialization were the work of colonizers. Despite the abolition of mentioning ethnicity in identity cards and prohibition of talking about ethnic identities in public, ethnicity infection is still prevalent in both common people and political elites. This time only one ethnic group (Tutsi) is indirectly acknowledged to be spoken in public mainly due to day after day activities destined to the memory of its members and victims of genocide and the grievance of genocide survivors. On the other side many literatures, including the famous UN Mapping Report, documented targeted systematic killings of Hutu civilians both in Rwanda and Congo by the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) a mainly Tutsi army during the so-called liberation war and its aftermath. These killings are labeled by the opponents of the current regime as the unrecognized genocide against the Hutu and this lead to the double genocide theory considered by the government, international non-governmental organizations, politicians and some academics as a form of denial of the internationally recognized Tutsi genocide.

Based on the current political system and its politics of de-ethnicization, authors like Reyntjens (2021) and Vandeginste (2014) coined the term ethnic amnesia which describes the practice as covering an infected wound. Seeing their direct shaping of the Rwandan politics since pre-colonial era, the currently accepted school of socio-economic groups mainly among western academics, and the current disputes between Rwandans over these socio-economic groups for some and ethnicities for others; the author wanted to answer three questions: are Hutu Tutsi and Twa really socioeconomic groups as many claim or distinct ethnic groups? What is the climate of the current Rwandan ethnoscape vis à vis the de-ethnicization policy? What is the role of white colonizers? Three research hypotheses are: Rwandan Hutu, Twa, and Tutsi are distinct ethnic groups; colonizers did not engineer Rwandan ethnicities; and ethnic divides are still prevalent in modern Rwanda.

Research Methodology

The methodological approach used in this paper is the comprehensive and comparative literature review on the concepts of ethnicity and ethnic identities, theories of ethnicity, the origin of Hutu Twa and Tutsi through anthropologic lenses, the evolution of the pre-colonial Rwandan socio-political space, and the contribution of colonizers, and finally, draw a conclusion of either retaining or rejecting the socio-economic terminology in favor of ethnic terminology. The results of this work will orient further research and guide political and policy

reformulations to avoid future damage due to forgotten preventable anterior causes. Based on this study also, a theory that facilitates to an explanation of the current Rwandan ethnoscape will be formulated.

Literature review

On the origins of Hutu Twa and Tutsi and the Rwandan pre-colonial social fabric: Cohesion or coercion?

Rwanda like other territories worldwide lived a history under aristocracy; this is the Tutsi Nyiginya dynasty from the late 15th century to the 20th century where important social and political positions were occupied almost entirely by Tutsis. After the 1994 war and genocide against the Tutsis, three main grand narratives regarding the origin of the conflict between Hutus and Tutsis dominate the academia. The first school which is also the position of the current Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF)'s government recognizes the peaceful cohabitation of the two groups of people and attribute the causation to the ethnicization of those groups by colonizers, the second argue that the latent conflict originate to the oppression of the kingship, while the third school attribute the fissure of the Rwandan social fabric to the oppressive aristocracy that was strengthened by the ethnicization of the Hutu and Tutsi groups by the colonizers and their support to the discriminatory and oppressive leadership of Tutsi elites. A comprehensive and comparative literature review was undertaken to make sense of what really happened, how the Rwandan kingdom was born and expanded, and how the social climate of the time led to troubled years from the 1959 social revolution to the bloodiest genocide of the 21st century.

According to Jessee and Watkins (2014), the history of Rwanda is highly politicized where besides the official narrative; there are other divergent versions of the story narrated in private settings and this continues to be problematic towards reconciliation endeavours taken by the government. This is also found in (Vansina, 2004: 4), who argues that while most historians rely on the writings of Alex Kagame, his vision of the past of Rwanda is not his own but from a small number of courtiers who were the official ideologues of the kingdom and whose main roles were to hold and defend the official narratives of the history. According to her, the whole historiography reproduces the royal ideology that existed in the 1900s.

In the context of making sense of the social aspect of Rwandans, one need to go back to the anthropologic explanations of the origin and settlements of the three groups namely Hutu, Twa and Tutsi; the creation and expansion of the Nyiginya dynasty; and the social stratification processes under the dynasty and their consequences on everyday life of inhabitants of the kingdom.

The first signs of human presence date as early as 1,000 BCE (Byanafashe & Rutayisire, 2016: 23; Saint-David, 2018: 15). According to Saint-David (2018: 15), the area were first populated by the Pygmy tribes and ancestors of the Twa and in the first millennium CE pastoralists Tutsi from the north of Rwanda and agriculturalists Hutu from the south of Rwanda migrated to this land. Byanafashe

and Rutayisire (2016: 49) retain that the Twa belonging to the pigmies are the first inhabitants of Africa including Rwanda, followed by Hutu whose presence date the first millennium CE. Carney (2014: 10) argue that Bantu-speaking groups later associated with the Hutu arrived in Rwanda beginning around 1100 CE as part of the broader Bantu migrations that shaped so much of Iron Age history in Africa. Even though Hutu were both agriculturalists and pastoralists, they were more associated with agriculture and Tutsi pastoralists were likely to have migrated into Rwanda over the course of several centuries between 1100 and 1650 CE.

As found in (Sellström et al., n.d.: 21-22), these Bantu-speaking agriculturalists grew sorghum, kept livestock and bees, hunted and developed village industries. They used to wear goatskins and bark cloths and were organized into lineages and clans under the leadership of heads and chiefs respectively. They coexisted with Twa and bartered skins and meats in exchange for salt and iron goods [see also (Magnarella, 2005)], and according to Uwizeyimana (2017), it is believed that Rwandan Twa was socially organized in families overseen by chiefs since where their communities are undisturbed like in forests of Uganda, currently they still have kings and council of elders to rule the community. After the arrival of Hutus, Twas continued to live their traditional ways in forests and whenever the agricultural land was required, mutual understanding and gifts were donated by Hutus in exchange for the forest being cleared and cultivated. While separate, Twa and Hutu kingdoms lived side by side, and each had its own territory, citizens, and leadership. The other side of the story argues that after their settlement, Hutu outnumbered Twa and began to take over their traditional hunting grounds hence forcing them to retreat into the forests (Wibabara, 2013). However, it is important to state here that no such conflicts between Hutu and Twa were ever recorded anywhere else in the literature or in the oral sources.

By the 15th century, Hutu were organized into statelets controlled by a dominant clan and made of different lineages that will become later dynasties ruled by chiefs or kings (*abahinza*) who were both land chiefs and ritual readers in charge of rain-making. Evidences suggest that some clans already had acquired cattle and several states already existed before the immigration of Tutsis mainly the Nyiginya clan. According to Kagame, seven major clans pre-date the Nyiginya clan era. Whether the Tutsi immigration into Rwanda was gradual or sharp is disputed, however from the 15th century the number of pastoralists increased in the already existing states. The first contact between Hutu and Tutsi is considered to be through gradual and peaceful infiltration and cattle products exchange with agricultural products forming the basis of social interactions. However, this peaceful coexistence was followed by Tutsi conquests followed also by direct establishment of Tutsi military rule and administration preceding a process directed towards the control of the factors of production involving gradual restriction of access to land, cattle and labour (Sellström et al., n.d.: 21-22).

According to Mamdani (2001: 43-50), on the search for origins and based on migration hypothesis, four schools of thought were formulated based on relevant studies. The first based on the phenotype classified Rwandans into Twa, very short

people like pigmies; Hutu, squat with medium height; and Tutsi, slender and tall people. These differences were basis for the migratory hypothesis that ancestors of these different groups migrated as different peoples into the African Great Lakes region. The second school went further and combines the phenotype and genotype like blood factors, the presence of sickle cell trait and the ability to digest the milk sugar lactose. In this context a survey in 1987 concluded that even though surrounded by Bantu population, Tutsi and Hima are genetically closer to Cushites and Ethiosemites; while another study concluded that sickle cell trait was common among Hutu but absent among Tutsi. While this was the basis of the concept of different races that was later discredited after evidences that sickle cell trait is a result of survival in area where malaria is endemic, this once again is found to be in favour of the migratory hypothesis where Tutsis migrated from a malaria free environment.

The ability to digest lactose also yielded nonconvincing results since worldwide the ability to digest lactose is limited in adults except in milk-dependent desert nomadic people. Studies in the Great Lakes region of Africa found that among Tutsi of Rwanda and Burundi, three out of four display this high ability to digest lactose; among Shi people of eastern Congo only 5 percent have this ability; while in the middle among Hutu one in three adults have this ability. The third school of thought is based on cultural anthropology with memory of people as the source. The final school that includes most historians is based on archeology and linguistics (Mamdani, 2001: 43-50).

Byanafashe and Rutayisire (2016: 49) argue that many theories try to show the origins of Hutu as including the central and southern pacific, northwest of the interlacustrine kingdom in Chad, and the Nigerian-Cameroonian belt; while the Ethiopian origin of Tutsi linked them to the Indian Hamites hence the origin of the Hamitic theory. Mamdani (2001: 46-47) argue that explorers and missionaries all were partisans of the Hamitic hypothesis that was discredited, but shaped the political institutions of both colonial and revolutionary Rwanda.

Even though disputes regarding the exact origin of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa among academics are not and will not be entirely resolved; Rwandan pre-colonial myths also emphasize different origins and surprisingly they emphasize on social divides and defamation among the three groups of Rwandans. The myth of *ibimanuka* meaning the ones considered to be descending from heaven mainly by foreign researchers however according to Israel Ntaganzwa, a Rwandan historian and crown councilor to the late King Jean-Baptiste Kigeli V Ndahindurwa, *ibimanuka* means people coming from the land of mountains higher than those of Rwandan land, the area called *ibusakazataka* meaning where houses are covered with mud, and this is Maasailand, located around the Kilimanjaro area. Accordingly, the origin of the ancestors of Gihanga, the creator of Rwanda, is therefore in and around today's Maasailand, in modern-day Tanzania (Saint-David, 2018: 16).

The other myths are those related to Kigwa, the son of the heavenly king Nkuba and first earthly king of Rwanda, who had his three sons: Gatutsi, Gahutu,

and Gatwa; where *Imana* (God), subsequently bestowed Gatutsi with the quality of anger, Gahutu with the qualities of disobedience and labor, and Gatwa with the quality of gluttony. Kigwa also tested his three sons by entrusting each of them with a calabash of milk. The next morning, Gatwa had drunk his milk, Gahutu had fallen asleep and in the carelessness of the sleep, had spilled his milk, while Gatutsi had preserved his calabash of milk and for his courage and obedience, Kigwa rewarded Gatutsi with command over the gluttonous serf Gatwa and the clumsy peasant Gahutu (Buckley-Zistel, 2009; Carney, 2014: 10-11).

While Carney (2014: 11) agreed with Bernardin Muzungu (in his “*Le problème des races au Rwanda*”) who argues that these myths do not reflect any true historical or geographical origins of Hutu, Twa, and Tutsi; according to him, Muzungu fails to note the inherent moral hierarchy implicit in these origin myths and since both myths stories reinforced traditional ethnic stereotypes while lending an air of divine sanction to Rwanda’s traditional social hierarchy, it kills the Muzungu’s claim that all the millennial history of co-existence between the two groups Hutu and Tutsi had been characterized by a flawless harmony.

Carney (2014: 11) argues that the Hutu-Tutsi-Twa division was not the sole or even preeminent concern of nineteenth-century royal origin myths; clan alliances, religious power, and warrior narratives appeared even more frequently. Vansina (2004: 33-35) also argues that clans found in actual Rwanda are found everywhere and mixed with one another and that a clan is not an unchanging entity that has always existed. While the Nyiginya clan developed from Ndori’s kinship after its emergence in the late seventeen century, most of the known genealogies showed that starting at that time all decent groups formed clans that are somehow attached to the ruling lineage. This proved that clans were not made of people that survived together and live and will continue to live together but have political dimensions. According to Nyagahene, the clans found in Rwanda and their ties to the pre-colonial kingdom are both real and imagined, these groups may be alliances rather than decent groups; they were mutable to the extent that every *umuryango* leader could always abandon his clan name and its food taboo to form an affiliation with another one.

In the preface of Saint-David (2018) by H. M. Yuhi VI Bushayija, the King of Rwanda; he argue that the roots of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi is the work of Belgian colonialists who separated the Hutu, Twa and Tutsi socio-economic categories into the ethno-racial groups hence confirming the harmonious cohabitation of these groups during pre-colonial era. However as we saw earlier Tutsis have immigrated the last and built and expanded their kingdom over the previously occupied and auto governed Hutu chiefdoms. According to Vansina (2004: 14), the Nyiginya kingdom didn’t appear in a total void but was created based on the economic, social, and cultural practices that its founder encountered in its area of creation, central current Rwanda. Moghalu (2015: 10-11) argues that the establishment Tutsi kingdom and its expansion engendered a corresponding loss of autonomy for the mainly agricultural Hutu. It was created in the 1600s by Ndori who appeared from the north and conquered Bumbogo and Buriza, then after he

crossed the Nyabarongo to capture the part of central Rwanda located within the great bend in that river that was to become the heart of his kingdom (Vansina, 2004: 46).

According to Donat Murego of the University of Louvain, who studied the sacred loyalty in pre-colonial Africa, with the conquest of the Hutu and Twa chiefs by the Tutsi kings in the 16th century, Tutsi power was established and the Hutu and their former chiefs had been defeated and reduced to servitude, the Tutsi monarch finished by placing his supreme authority beyond question (Saint-David, 2018: 17-18).

In the beginning Ndori used the *ubugabire* contracts (giving cows) to get allies and after successful settlement, either by guile or by force he makes numerous conquests on the small kingdoms which occupied central Rwanda. After his success in occupying central Rwanda, Ndori spent the rest of his life waging wars, however at his death; the kingdom was merely 10 percent of the territory of today's Republic of Rwanda. One could cross it in a single long day from east to west and in two days from north to south. While Vansina questioned the subsequent military operations as being raids or conquests, she notes that during these wars leaders were killed, possessions looted, beautiful women captured and reduced to servitude, and warriors returned to Rwanda (Vansina, 2004: 47-54). Here I argue that the subsequent annexation of neighboring countries following the defeat in such wars can't mean anything else than conquest.

According to her, the first waves of social transformation started after the 1796 to 1801 civil war that reduced the personal power of the king in favor of some great families whose ideas dictated the policy of the kingdom until 1875. The demographic growth of the time increased these types of families and created an issue of profitable posts for their sons. In the search for solutions, a number of options included the territorial expansions necessitating further conquest wars, multiplying the positions with the Rwandan realm, and dividing domains while increasing exploitation of subjects, or by ousting rival families so as to seize their posts and goods.

This resulted in increased internal rivalries in the court and the expansion of Rwanda which resulted in the incorporation of nearly all the regions that form the present Republic of Rwanda and even some beyond. The explosive population growth in the 18th and 19th centuries is thought to be a result of the ideology that one is secure if he has a strong family due to the number of its members or the desire to self-reproduce in children. The high population density led to the need of a new land tenure and territorial organization that reinforced the power of local chiefs. Since then the borders of the so called *ingobyi* domain became demarcated and local chiefs started interfering in the affairs of each small *inzu* lineage by approving of and guaranteeing the borders of the plots called *umunani* within each *ingobyi* that were given as bequests to sons on the occasion of their marriage (Vansina, 2004: 126-130). She continues to argue that with time these plots became smaller and smaller and at the end of 19th century farmers without lands or with insufficient lands began to appear, hence the beginning of proletarian day laborers

called *umucancuro* or *abacancuro*, forced to hire themselves out to whoever would pay them in foodstuffs. Besides offering service in exchange for foodstuffs for some, others were forced to do so because their land was so small to pay their dues, this is the so called *uburetwa*. These farmers were mainly young men who waited for the death of their fathers and uncles in order to inherit their tracts of land, but soon afterward, day laborers began appearing without any hope of an inheritance or of access to a plot of land big enough to feed them (Vansina, 2004: 130).

The increase of herders and even aristocrats aggravated the crumbling of land tenure base and their increased rivalries became even bitter. Their attempt to ameliorate their social position led to an increased number of *ubuhake* contracts and an increase in new armies created that required more service and goods from farmers under their command. The pressure of population and cattle growth led to the reserved domain innovation where the land rich in pasture was detached to the other and given to the beneficiary who was only accountable to the king or to the person who had endowed him, this favored the most powerful herders at the expense of a very large number of other herders who were just as Tutsi as their peers. These herders now are refused access to the land they used to graze their cattle, they had to become clients of the beneficiary or they had somehow to graze their cattle on the public pastures that were continually shrinking as a result of the creation of new reserved domains. The reduced pasture also reduced the number of cattle slowly until the person is driven into poverty since also those who had failed to be accepted as clients by one or another of the beneficiaries of reserved domains ended up getting rid of some or even of all of their cattle (Vansina, 2004: 130-132).

The scarcity of public grazing land led to the creation of a new institution, the chief of the long grass, *umutware w'umukenke*. From now on, the herders became subjects of the chief of the long grass so that the former provincial chief now ruled only over the farmers. This new reality resulted in a new title, and henceforth these chiefs were no longer called "chief of the province," *umutware w'intara*, but "chief of the land," *umutware w'ubutaka*. The result was an increase in the number of chiefs that require dues: *umunyamukenke* in cattle; and *umunyabutaka* in foodstuffs, manufactures and, above all, corvée labor. The result of the reserved domain was the exploitation of inferior people both farmers and herders and this led to the general pauperization of the bulk of the inhabitants of the country affecting herders just as much as farmers. The former chiefs of provinces now chiefs of land, feeling threatened increased the dues and corvées that they could extract from their taxpayers. In the 1860s a new system of exploitation called *uburetwa*, was invented to designate the obligations of tenants to their masters on *ubukonde* land and was adopted by the chiefs of land that considered themselves to be master of the arable land and the farmers their tenants (Vansina, 2004: 132-134).

In addition to dues that took a large fraction of family's crops, service delivery now takes two days out of every four days; this is a half of available time destined to the chief and was considered a heavy burden for most taxpayers. Things evolved to the extent that certain chiefs of the land began exploiting the farmers mercilessly. The imposition of *ubutetwa* to farmers not herders strengthened the

social divide between Hutu and Tutsi and subsequent divide of society from top to bottom into these two hierarchized and opposed social categories. From Ndori's reign and forth the term Tutsi was used to designate the political elite while Hutu in Vansina's terminology, was a demeaning term that alluded to rural boorishness or loutish behavior used by the elite (Vansina, 2004: 134-135). According to Carney (2014: 13), the term *abahutu* came into common usage as a socially derogatory term implying political marginalization; this is the case of a traditional Kinyarwanda phrase *Sindi umuhutu wawe* that literally mean I am not your servant.

Form the time of *uburetwa* on, Hutu and Tutsi no longer designate a relative category with respect to class or dependency or occupation but became an absolute one. The absolute division between Hutu and Tutsi institutionalized by the daily practice of *uburetwa* rapidly displaced the older social class consciousness. From the 1870s, the awareness of the division between Tutsi herders and Hutu farmers thus spread all over Rwanda and due to the rancor that *uburetwa* caused, rebellion began to ferment among the exploited. After the 1885 several spontaneous revolts broke out led by farmers driven to distraction by too much oppression, however they were easily crushed. Tensions between Tutsi and Hutu appeared in the south of the country during the fighting in Bwanamukari before 1890 and again in 1897- 1899, where the lineages of the high aristocracy opposed themselves to what they called the "new men" of Rwabugiri, whom they decried as Hutu. In both cases the aristocrats sought revenge for what they chose to interpret as an insult to Tutsi. In in 1892 or around 1895, the insurrection against Tutsi had already broken out in the south of the country before the succession crisis and coup of Rucunshu in December 1896 that was followed by an increased Nyiginya resentment and even more rebellion and revolts in Gisaka and Ndorwa (Vansina, 2004: 136-137).

The other incident was an armed anti-Tutsi movement that broke out in the northwest in 1897 and engulfed countries from Bugoyi to Kanage in Buberuka, including Rwankeri, Bushiru, Cyingogo, Buhoma, Murera, Bukonya, and Bugarura. However these armies led by former local kings who lived there were not strong enough to resist the counterattack of army of the court that after two years of combat had to surrender. According to Vansina this insurrection is of particular importance since it proves without any ambiguity not only that the population at this time was conscious of a great divide between Tutsi and Hutu, but also that the antagonism between these two social categories had already broken into the open. This rejects the views of those who attribute the distinction between Tutsi and Hutu as well as the engendering of their mutual hostility to each other to the first Europeans (Vansina, 2004: 138-139). She also argues that the linguistic and cultural unit of Rwanda of today did not exist in the seventeenth century and Rwanda is not a natural nation but a result of the Nyiginya expansion in the 18th to 20th century where Rwanda became a nation state (Vansina, 2004: 198).

According to Balyage (2000), it is important to note is that not the whole Rwanda was under the Tutsi kingdom during the precolonial era, there were several Hutu principalities which had survived mainly in the north, northwest and southwest, and these were annexed during colonial era. Europeans gave a lot of

support towards the subjugation of the Hutu territories such as Kibari, Bushiru, and Bukonya.

There is also a claim that through the process of *dehutuization* a successful Hutu could become Tutsi and a Tutsi who become poor due to the loss of cattle and turn to cultivation for subsistence or marry into a Hutu family could become a Hutu (Buckley-Zistel, 2009; Magnarella, 2005). According to Magnarella (2005), there is no academic statistics to back this claim; it seems that this intercaste mobility was extremely rare.

In short this section shed light on three concepts: the different anthropologic origins of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa as different groups of people, the falsification and re-writing of the Rwandan official history for political ends, and the non-harmonious and discriminative social stratification of the Rwandan pre-colonial era. The migration hypothesis was corroborated by the genotypic sickle cell trait analysis to confirm different migratory origins as confirmed by official kingdom narratives. Contrary to the current official position that precolonial Rwanda was flawless harmonious kingship, evidences point to the discrimination and derogation deep imbedded in everyday social life, ever increasing unilateral social exploitation by Tutsi on Hutu and Twa that compromised equitable socio-economic development hence led to the irreversible social fabric breaking, social revolts and counter conquest wars were common. Denying this truth for political ends was and still is complemented by the grandiose concept of inter-caste mobility that is not significantly statistically supported. With presented facts it is reasonable to argue that social divides, considered driving force towards ethnicity creation, were the strengthening pillar of the Tutsi Nyiginya dynasty.

Colonizers: Made fire or added oil to it?

The first colonizer arrived in Rwanda in 1897; this is after about 300 years of the existence of a Rwandan society under the Nyiginya dynasty. Contrary to arguments retained by Buckley-Zistel (2009) that “all Rwandans were living together and speaking the same language, they had the same culture and loved each other, that ethnicities did not exist, conflicts did not occur, and all people considered themselves to be Rwandan or the King’s People, and the King being the stump, which brought them together”; Republic of Rwanda, Office of the President of the Republic (1999) that “before colonial year i.e. year 1900, there was strong unity among Rwandans, no ethnical war took place between them before that year”; and found also in (Nikuze, 2014) that Rwandans were a united people throughout the precolonial era; Kamunanwire (1995) argue that Rwandese divided themselves into three distinct groups Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa.

According to Magnarella (2000), with reference to practices like *corvée* labor *uburetwa* enforced only on Hutu farmers and *ubuhake*, socioeconomic and political division appeared so rigid where Tutsi monopolized all administrative positions; seeing that the Tutsi notions of superior worth were reflected in the law they enforced; obviously, Rwanda was not a land of social harmony and equality prior to European colonialization. He reproduced also the writings of Potier (1995:

39) that “ethnic divisions and obvious hatred toward the Tutsi overlords were well entrenched by the time the Germans began to colonize Rwanda”. Inequity and discrimination were also obvious through the myths explaining origins of Rwandan ethnic groups as we saw previously, and a considerable number of insurrections and revolts against oppressive Nyiginya dynasty that impoverished common people as presented in (Vansina, 2004) all prove that social inequality prevailed in Rwanda and that ethnic divides were prominent well before the arrival of colonizers.

Germans colonized Rwanda and Burundi from 1895 until 1919 and using their indirect rule approach which effectively reinforced the pre-existing complex and highly organised Tutsi monarchical system, and the power of the Tutsi aristocracy (Mayersen, 2012; Uwizeyimana, 2017). This practice mutually benefited Germans and the King; Germans helped king Musinga in further annexation of the Hutu principalities and increase in Tutsi chiefly power who also helped them to establish and expand their authority in the northwest of the colony (Magnarella, 2000).

Through their divide and rule tactics, Germans maintained the already existing socio-economic divide and strengthened these distinctions. After the death of King Rwabugiri in 1895, through his successor King Musinga, Germans imposed a system of exclusive colonial rule through the Tutsi court and this is the so called dual colonialism. After the World War II, Germany lost Rwanda to Belgium that started its colonial period from 1919 to 1962 (Kamunanwire, 1995).

Belgians continued the already existing Tutsi preferential treatment and with the support of the catholic missionaries, they were trained, educated and given jobs in the Belgian colonial civil service. While Tutsi elites were granted access to positions of power and Tutsi patrons of *ubuhake* maintained a socio-economically rewarding position, all vestiges of the privileged status of the Hutu (*ubukonde*) land chiefs were abolished by Belgians. This increased access to civil service, clergy and military and provided alternate means to accumulate more wealth and increased power for Tutsi chiefs and this furthered ethnic divide and stratification among Hutu and Tutsi (Kamunanwire, 1995).

According to Uwizeyimana (2017), the introduction of mandatory identity card system in 1933 deepened social division since the card carried the ethnic group of the holder and since then, social relationships became more uniform, rigid, unequal, and exploitative than ever, with a clear hierarchy from *Bazungu* (whites) to Tutsi to Hutu to Twa, with each higher level having privileges denied to the lower level and with an ideology of racial superiority underlying this system of inequality. According to him, there is no record of Tutsi rejecting this divisive device instead it made it easy for them to maintain their privilege as the ruling class.

According to Kaine (1997) as reproduced in (Uwizeyimana, 2017) with commentaries “it suited the interests of the colonists to rule through the existing Tutsi elite, who showed themselves to be willing and compliant, more interested in the preservation of their own privilege and material wealth than in any question of national identity in return for their cooperation and support to the colonial administration, the Tutsi overlords were given extended powers over the lives of

the Hutus. The colonial system became popular among the Tutsi ethnic group because it practically allowed even minor Tutsi chiefs to exploit their Hutu subjects and demand higher contributions of their crops and longer working hours. Therefore, while it is often argued that the power of the Tutsi king was somewhat curtailed under Belgian administration, evidence suggests the two systems strengthened each other in many ways". This shows that the Hutu were exploited by both the Tutsi and the colonizers.

In summary, while political elites blame all the Rwandan misfortunes on colonizers, evidences suggest that through their indirect rule, colonizers never divided Rwandans but exploited and strengthened the already existing structures and the favored party could not deny the increased privileges and never objected the practice. Their use of Tutsi in over-exploitation of already oppressed Hutu and Twa heightened the hate and tension between Hutu and Tutsi. The introduction of the mandatory identity cards carrying these social classes or ethnicities rigidified this self-identification. Of course no one can undermine the effect of racial theories developed and adopted by colonizers such as the hamitic theory that hailed the super-manhood of Tutsi that was used as instrument and scapegoat for social discrimination and social violence later on. With available sufficient evidences, colonizers are not the prime engineers of the problematic Rwandan social stratification and ethnicization; it is a work of Rwandan themselves since even before colonizers' racial theories, their prototypes were found even in the Rwandan founding myths that were officially recognized and openly sang. Colonizers didn't make fire, they added oil to it.

Are Hutu Twa and Tutsi socio-economic classes or distinct ethnicities?

According to Carney (2014), regarding Hutu Tutsi and Twa, the socioeconomic school remains influential, especially among Rwanda's RPF government and Westerners' writings after the 1994 war and genocide against the Tutsi. The proponents of this school argue that since all groups of people speak the same language and share the same culture among others, they can't belong to different ethnic identities. The following paragraphs are destined to the analysis of these groups with reference to their history and the available literature dedicated to the studies of social groups, ethnic groups and ethnicity.

According to Berat (2017), the word ethnic is derived from the Greek word *ethnos* meaning people or folk and it was used in everyday life to mean a large number or a group of either humans or animals. In the 19th century, the word was attached to the nation and the new meaning for ethnic group became a group of people sharing characteristics such as language, cultural, social or national experiences. He notes that an ethnic group is an identity of a community without political ambitions. Depending upon the sources used to determine the membership, five categories are: ethno-national, ethno-linguistic, ethno-regional, ethno-religious, and ethno-racial.

According to Thompson (2000) as found in (Uwaifo, 2016), ethnic group is defined as a community of people who have the conviction that they have a

common identity and common fate based on issues of origin, kinship, ties, traditions, cultural uniqueness, a shared history and possibly a shared language. Accordingly, ethnic group is like an imagined community in a nation hence ethnicity focuses on sentiments of origin and descent rather than geographical considerations (El Koubi, 2016).

Chandra (2011) define ethnic group as “a subset of categories in which descent-based attributes are necessary for membership” and distinguish two types including nominal ethnic identities that he define as the “ethnic identity categories for which we possess the descent-based attributes for membership whether or not we actually profess to be members” and activated ethnic identities as “the ethnic identity categories in which we actually profess, or to which we are assigned membership”. He argues that to be an ethnic group four characteristics have to be fulfilled. First, the subset of descent-based categories have to include only identity categories based on the region, religion, sect, language family, language, dialect, caste, clan, tribe or nationality of one’s parents or ancestors, or one’s own physical features. Second, membership in these identity categories should comprise a subset of a country’s population but not the whole. Third, it should be large enough that all members are not personally known to or related to each other and finally, if one sibling is eligible for membership in an ethnic identity category, then all siblings should be. By respecting the social sciences definitions that emphasize them, he argues, “features such as a common culture, common territory, common history or a common language are variables that sometimes distinguish ethnic identities rather than the constants that define them”. Hence according to Schermerhen (1970) as reproduced in (Chakraborty & Ghosh, 2013) “an ethnic group is a collectivity within a larger society having real or accepted common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood”.

This is also corroborated by Cohen (2004) that due to the lack of definitive and objective boundaries, membership in an ethnic group is determined by a belief, held both by insiders and outsiders, that given individuals constitute such a group and other features like language, religion, race, cultural traits, and a sense of a shared history, as well as powerful symbols associated with the ethnic group, serve to reinforce and perpetuate this subjective feeling of belonging. He also acknowledges that sense of belonging to an ethnic group can give individuals feelings of pride in its unique character, continuity with the past, and survival beyond the self. I consequently argue that things may be the opposite, like feeling ashamed, when belonging to an ethnic group is accompanied by discrimination and denied human rights.

When ethnic groups are used in politics, two concepts that are used interchangeably emerge, these are ethnicity and tribalism. Uwaifo (2016) retains the Nnoli definition of ethnicity as “social phenomenon associated with the identity of members of the largest possible competing communal groups (ethnic groups) seeking to protect and advance their interest in a political system”. He also argues that ethnicity always involves demands by one group on other competing group.

Tribalism which related to tribe is only an element that could constitute ethnicity hence ethnicity is wider in context than tribalism. He also retains the Nnoli argument that ethnicity do not exist until a demand is made by one group to seek for advantage and benefits for its group relative to what another group is seemingly enjoying.

Rwandan Hutu Twa and Tutsi groups are hardly defined in the same way among academics. Different terminologies are used including race, ethnicity, caste, socioeconomic status, or political power (Carney, 2012). He also argue that “Thousands of wealthy Hutu were never reclassified as Tutsi, and thousands of lower-class Tutsi struggled to eke out a living far from the luxuries of the royal court *and were never reclassified as Hutu* [my clarification]”. This once again favors the position that the interethnic fluidity was not as easy as some authors claim. Percival and Homer-Dixon (1996) argue that while Hutu and Tutsi were largely constructed social categories representing differing socioeconomic positions, their conflicts are rooted in centuries-long competition for control of land and power.

I retain that Hutu Twa and Tutsi while they used to represent socio-economic classes; they evolved to be distinct ethnicities. This was a result of many years of discrimination, exploitation, and social injustice suffered by Twa and Hutu in hands of Tutsi; that developed sentiments of belonging, self-identities, and the consciousness of us and others. Carney (2014) argues that ethnic identities were not primordial; they were contextually created, they altered over time, and they evolved differently in different places and contexts. Social groups are ethnicized through essentialization, politicization, and institutionalization. I also retain that while these groups known to have lived and continue to live under conflict climate, social conflict is not inherently or exclusively racial, nor is racial or ethnic difference inherently conflictual (Carney, 2014).

The concept of belonging, self-identity and ethnic attachment can be further understood by considering the Ethiopian crisis in Tigray province and Congolese crisis related to M23 rebel movement using tweets of Rwandans and Ugandans. General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, the first son and commander of the Ugandan People Defense Forces (UPDF) land army via his account @mkainerugaba, on 27 may 2022 he wrote “I was judged enough as a child for my tribe, my looks, my language etc. I will always oppose people who think like that. Batutsi/Bahima in Eastern DRC should not be victimized at all. The consequences may be terrible.” Again he wrote “It is not a crime to be a Mututsi or a Muhima or Muhema or a Munyamulenge! M23 has been seeking dialogue for years. The East African community should help solve this problem”. On May 7th 2022, he wrote “I know our problems as men; the first thing we usually fight for is women. We can kill each other over that question. But Amhara, Tigrayans, Oromos and Somali are all Bahima/Batutsi. We look the same and have the same culture. Let’s all make peace, look after our women and cows”. On June 3rd 2022, he wrote “I am very glad to see that very many African Americans are beginning to believe in the truth of Bachwezi! I will offer some free advice. Bachwezi are Angels of almighty God that

can NEVER, EVER be defeated!!! Bachwezi are black Angels but also the most beautiful Angels in heaven”; while on May 26th 2022 he wrote on a picture of Paul Kagame when he was a student “A young Muchwezi, H.E. President @PaulKagame, in Ntare Secondary School. He is a Muchwezi till this day”.

Bachwezi are said to be from Chwezi dynasty believed to reign from 1300 AD to 1400 AD (Dunbar, 1965: 25). Bachwezi were pastoralists believed to be linked to Ethiopians or Egyptians and hamites. They are ancestors of Bahima, Bahuma, Batutsi and Bahinda (Balyage, 2000). According to General Kainerugaba this imaginary community of legendary people that are spread in many countries in Africa and with different mythical origins culminating to extra-Africa as common point of origin, explained to emphasize their superiority, still matters.

On the side of Rwandans also the sentiments of attachments are also vivid. Regarding the Congo crisis on twitter, Tito Rutaremara, the founding member and ideologue of the Rwandan Patriotic front (RPF) via his account @titorutaremara4 on the 12th June 2022 wrote “*Abo banyepolitiki nibo bigisha amacakubiri ategura genocide y’abatutsi bo muri Congo, ibi birigukorwa izuba riva communaute internationale irebera nkuko byabaye muri genocide yakorewe abatutsi mu Rwanda mu 1994.*” My translation “those politicians are the ones that are preaching discrimination that prepare genocide of Congolese Tutsi, this is being done on daylight while the international community is indifferent like it happened in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide against Tutsi”. @SadateMunyakazi wrote on the 19th June 2022 “*Imyiteguro yo kurimbura abanyarwanda n’abatutsi bo muri Congo irimo kugera ku musozo. Ese isi yaba igiye kurebera genocide ya mbere muri iki kinyejana cya 21?! Ikaba iya kabiri yaba ikorewe abatutsi mugihe kitageze ku myaka 30?! My translation, “preparations for extermination of Rwandans and Congolese Tutsi are already finished. Is the world going to stand watching an ongoing genocide of the 21st century?! It may be the second perpetrated against Tutsi in less than 30 years?!” These empathies on the side of Rwandan Tutsi and genocide survivors clearly shows the concept of self-identity regardless the fact that the ethnic identities have been outlawed in Rwanda and that this is a foreign country’s internal affair.*

In short, this section analyzed the Rwandan Hutu, Tutsi and Twa in the lenses of contemporary definitions and concept of ethnicity. While they used to mean one’s social status, they were ethnicized through their misuses in a discriminatory and repressive political system and the presented evidences sustain the concept of self-identification and the sentiments of belongingness considered cornerstones in ethnicity to be still prevalent in modern Rwanda not only in ordinary people but also in political elites and opinion leaders. According to available reasonable evidences, Rwandan Hutu, Tutsi and Twa are not social groups, castes or any other thing else than ethnic groups.

Theoretical framework of ethnicity in Rwanda: Integrated-blame game theory

Kaliyev and Ventsel (2021) present two theories of ethnicity: primordialism and constructivism; while (Yang, 2000) comparatively analyzed the

merits and demerits of three theories of ethnicity: Primordialism, constructivism, and instrumentalism and tried to force them together and come up with an integrated theory of ethnicity.

According to Kaliyev and Ventsel (2021) and Yang (2000), the primordialist school advocates that ethnicity are communities of people with an unchanging biological kinship, that it is an ascribed identity or assigned status, something inherited from ancestors. Ethnic boundaries are fixed or immutable and shaped by the conflicts with other neighbouring ethnicities throughout the history of existence. According to Yang (2000), the primordialism's emphasis on sentiment and psychology succeed in explaining the rising and tenacity of ethnic attachment however, the school can't be without demerits. He argue that among the shortcomings of this school include the failure to acknowledge larger historical and structural conditions that construct or deconstruct and reinforce or undermine ethnic loyalties; and neglecting the economic and political interests closely associated with ethnic sentiment and practice.

Until the 1970s when the constructionist school emerged, the primordialist school was the dominant way of thinking and this continued to be the case of some people today (Yang, 2000). According to Kaliyev and Ventsel (2021) and Yang (2000), constructionist school or constructivist school of ethnicity define ethnicity as social construct where affiliation and identification is determined or constructed by society. Ethnic boundaries are flexible and changeable; ethnicity is dynamic and is a reaction to changing social environment. The advocates of constructivism claim that the individual may have multiple ethnic identities and could be edited or changed by the human acts.

A number of perspectives emerged from this school including the emergent ethnicity pioneered by William Yancey et al. in 1976 and emphasizes that formation, crystallization, and development of ethnic communities are shaped by industrialization process or socio-economic development in the host society and the position of ethnic groups within it. Accordingly, ethnicity emerges as a response to structural changes in society. Jonathan Sarna in 1978 pioneered the so called "theory of ethnicization" where ethnicity is created by either ascription where individuals are assigned a particular ethnicity by outsiders such as government, churches, schools, media etc. or adversity that includes prejudice, discrimination, hostility, and hardship (Yang, 2000). According to him, constructivism school's shortcoming include ignoring the ancestral basis of ethnicity, deemphasizing the limitation of social construction, and paying insufficient attention to the role of political and economic interest in the construction of ethnicity.

On the other hand, instrumentalist school view ethnicity as an instrument or a strategic tool for gaining resources; people become ethnic and remain ethnic when their ethnicity yields significant return on them; ethnicity exists and persists because it is useful. Pioneers of this school include Natan Glazer and Daniel Moynhan (1975) who argue that ethnicity is not simply a mix of effective sentiments but like class and nationality, it is a mean of political mobilization for advancing group interests hence ethnic groups are also interest groups. The

advantages range from the moral and material support provided by ethnic network to political gains made through ethnic bloc voting (Yang, 2000). He also reproduced the Orlando Patterson (1975) argument that the strength, scope, viability, and bases of ethnic identity are determined by and used to serve the economic and general class interests of individuals hence interests are sole determinant of ethnic identity and ethnic affiliation tends to be transient and situational as the benefits of ethnicity shifts.

The recent instrumentalist formulation is the so called rational choice theory where people act to promote their socio-economic positions by minimizing the costs of, and maximizing the potential benefits of, their actions. Here, ethnic affiliation is based on the rational calculation of the costs and benefits of ethnic associations. According to advocates of this theory, ethnicity is an option. You choose an ethnicity over the other or avoid association with an ethnic group because of the utility or cost of such an affiliation hence some people favor an ethnic affiliation because it is beneficial while other people hide or deny an ethnic identity because it will bring disadvantages (Yang, 2000). He argue on the shortcomings of this theory including that the choice is limited since it is subject to ancestral constraints defined by the society, not everyone can freely choose an ethnic identity. Also he noted that not all affiliations are rational and materialistic since some affiliations are done for psychological satisfaction including emotional fulfillment, social attachment and recreational pleasure.

Considering the merits and demerits of the three schools of ethnicity, Yang (2000) forced them together and based on four propositions: ethnicity is partly ascribed because it is partly based on ancestry or presumed ancestry that normally carries certain physical or cultural characteristics and national or territorial origins; ethnicity is largely constructed by the society; costs and benefits associated with ethnic group memberships partly determine ethnic affiliation or identification; and that ethnic boundaries are relatively stable but they can change from time to time especially when existing ethnic categories are challenged; he formulated the integrated approach (theory) to ethnicity.

In Rwandan context and retaining the Yang's integrated theory of ethnicity; Hutu Twa and Tutsi ethnic groups are based on identity constructed over mythical ancestry, physical appearance, and socio-economic statuses; the ethnic boundaries are evolved to be relatively stable even though some isolated cases of fluidity have been orally accounted; and the politico-economic gains contributed to the solidification of these ethnic groups. Very important in Rwandan case is that since both Tutsi and Hutu all participated in wrongdoings against each other over the course of history until today, contemporary ethnic tension is characterized by blame-game where instead of power sharing, dialogue and drawing lessons from past mistakes, based solely on the internationally accepted genocide against Tutsi, the current Tutsi regime rejects completely any contribution of Tutsi in writing Rwandan history and creates two blocs: Tutsi survivors of a genocide and Hutu perpetrators. On the other side Hutu also claim to be subject of discrimination during precolonial and colonial period, unrecognized genocide victims, and live a

discrimination period again. I argue that to better conceptualize the status quo of Rwandan ethnicity, integrated-blame game theory, that link the Yang's integrated theory of ethnicity and the blame game concept fully explain the uniqueness of the current Rwandan ethnoscape. In short, this section documented existing theories of ethnicity and found the Yang's integrated approach to ethnicity partially covers the current Rwandan ethnoscape and the "Integrated-blame game theory" of ethnicity was formulated to fully explain the status quo.

Discussion of the Findings

The research endeavor was taken in order to answer three questions: the true nature of the so called Rwandan socio-economic classes and why this terminology is preferred by the current regime, the role of colonizers in the ethnicization process if the former socio-economic classes evolved to become ethnic groups, and whether ethnic divides are no longer after attempted de-ethnicization policy. Evidences gathered sustained all hypotheses that Rwandan Hutu, Twa, and Tutsi are distinct ethnic groups; that colonizers did not engineer Rwandan ethnicity; and that ethnic divides are still prevalent in modern Rwanda. While Tutsi settlement in Rwanda was proven to be a peaceful process, the creation and expansion of their dynasty through conquest wars waged against self-governed Hutu and Twa kinglets and chiefdoms and their subsequent enslavement marked the beginning of the ethnicization of the already present distinct socio-economic classes. While no available evidence of how was the feeling of belonging to either of those classes in the pre-nyiginya era, in nyiginya era being a Hutu or Twa peasant had to be accompanied by unpleasant daily life and enjoyment of birthright privileges by Tutsi. Since after the genocide against Tutsi that a mainly Tutsi army claim to have stopped and the mainly Tutsi pseudo-single party government established (Reyntjens, 2021), many attempts have been made to improve social cohesion including the partial ban of public uttering of ethnic identities (since they resurface during genocide commemoration activities, and the establishment of social funds for only Tutsi survivors), the creation of organs such as the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) and the Office of the Ombudsman, the *Ndi Umunyarwanda* (I am a Rwandan) a form of nationalism promotion, and the most recent creation of the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement but with no success. Here two problems come to mind: why ethnic divides are still prevalent regardless of their eradication measures and why political elites deny their existence instead of revising their policies.

The numbers of failed policies and current attempt towards de-ethnicization is an indicator of the perception of the threat by political elites since corruption, instrumentalization of the judicial system, discrimination, favoritism, the lack of freedom of speech and freedom of the press and other forms of social injustice are still found in Rwandan socio-economic arena. According to Wiley et al. (2013), an ethnic based rejection is argued to strengthen ingroup identification and make people feel less connected to the offending party and the concept of rejection-identification explains that when members of racial and ethnic groups

perceive rejection on the basis of their group membership, they identify with that group more strongly. They argue also on the concept of rejection-disidentification when members of racial and ethnic minority groups distance themselves from people who reject them on the basis of their group memberships. Due to the politicization of history, lack of mutual understanding and empathy; the current political system try cover the untreated infected wound and since any attempt at improving social cohesion promote the amnesia of unsettled matters, is destined to total failure. Instead of recourse to dialogues, Rwandan ethnic groups blame each other for the contribution in horror historic events that happened and the concepts of the country's rebirth and never again for the basis of perceived socio-economic disadvantages due to being a member of a group classified as "others" as opposed to "us" first. This is where the integrated-blame game theory of ethnicity comes into play to explain the current ethnoscape of Rwanda.

As to why the political elites deny this reality, is because according to Kwatamba (2008), those at the centre of power pursue insular, sectarian and self-serving interests. According to Ilorah (2009), these people enjoy and are characterized by monopolization of power, abuse of privileges, arrogance and waste of resources by the political leadership. According to him "socio-economic crises in many African countries are aggravated by practices of ethnic bias and favoritism that have consistently violated the principle of the impersonality of economic agents, caused resentment among the marginalized ethnic groups, fuelled conflicts and retarded development on the continent". He argue also that these elites use and depend on state resources to maintain their power base, they resist any restructuring away from this dependency, including market liberalization programmes since they see economic reforms as barriers to important sources of self-enrichment and manipulate members of their ethnic group into believing that reforms are threats to both their political and economic power bases, and that they have a relatively prosperous community, so that reforms are more likely to reverse than increase that prosperity. They do all bad things such as manipulation of laws and regulations, violating individual rights, including the right to produce and make a profit. To put it simple political elites deny all those forms of discrimination and existing fracture of the social fabric because of egocentrism. According to Laurence (2011), any attempt to solving social tensions that not relegate the role of disadvantage at the expense of simply attempting to encourage greater community interaction is destined to failure. Hence ethnic divides and related consequences in Rwanda will not be solved by chosen amnesia but these ethnic groups sitting and facing them together with mutual respect and understanding.

Conclusion

Contrary to the claim of Yuhi VI Bushayija that the Belgian colonizers converted the Rwandan three socio-economic groups into ethno-racial groups; Rwandan Hutu and Twa were victimized for many centuries by their fellow Rwandan Tutsi before colonization. They have been socially, politically and

economically marginalized; they lived social injustice, they have lost farming land and hunting forests in favor of the promotion of cattle they don't own and reduced to servitude and inhumanely exploited through *uburetwa* and *ubuhake*. When colonizers arrived, they strengthen the already existing oppressive political system and added the identity card that solidified the identification by ethnicity and on the exploitation instruments list; they added *shiku* and inhumane forms of punishments like *ikiboko*. These inflicted on them unimaginable physical and mental damage. Through self-identification, belongingness and attachment the former socioeconomic groups were converted into distinct ethnicities. Ethnic tension had borne the 1959 social revolution; subsequent interethnic violence and 1994 genocide against Tutsi and systematic Hutu massacres. Ethnic tension is still prevalent in contemporary Rwanda, the chosen amnesia as a form of settling social conflict never worked and something needs to be done if we want to avoid the history to repeat itself.***

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